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Date: February 21, 2017

Friends of the Six Rivers NF

Dear Friend,

I am very pleased to announce the Six Rivers National Forest, in collaboration with the Western Klamath Restoration Partnership (WKRP), is commencing a 30-day Scoping period between February 21, 2017, and March 23, 2017, in preparation for the Somes Bar Integrated Fire Management Project Environmental Assessment (hereafter Somes Bar Project), as required by the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (NEPA). This Act guides the Forest Service environmental analysis and decision-making process, and stipulates opportunities for interested parties to review and comment on land management activities proposed on public lands.

During the Scoping period, my staff is hosting a public meeting on March 1st, from 5 to 7 pm at the Panamint Building in Orleans with the WKRP collaborative group. We are all very excited to share years of collaborative work culminating with this proposal. If you haven't already participated in the WKRP process, this is your opportunity to ask questions and learn where and what treatments may occur on lands important to you. Your feedback early in the planning process is important in helping us construct a better project. It will also help identify issues that may act to refine the proposal, warrant the development of an alternative and/or influence the pending federal decision.

The Somes Bar Project is the outcome of an exciting community developed approach to restore the process and function of fire in the wildland urban interface (WUI). This planning process was based on creating trust, using local knowledge and building lasting relationships between community members, agencies and organizations to accelerate restoring all-lands across large landscapes, regardless of whether they are on public or private lands. Simply put, this project prepares the landscape to see fire again.

Ultimately, the goal of this coordinated effort is to utilize an all hands, all lands approach to ecological restoration on the Six Rivers NF. This includes land owners and a diverse group of partners to modify prescribed fire and wildfire behavior on this landscape. As the local workforce develops, local economies would be able to fully integrate, expand upon, and train within a fire adaptation, management, and response framework to incrementally restore natural fire disturbance processes across all lands.

The Somes Bar Project is designed to apply a variety of proposed manual and mechanical fuels reduction treatments and prescribed burning across 5,500 acres of National Forest System lands around the community of Somes Bar; specifically targeting four areas - Rogers Creek, Ti Bar,



Patterson, and Donahue Flat (see enclosed map). Fuels treatments would be implemented in phases, some areas requiring multiple entries, over a 15 period located in T.11N, R.6E. Sections 5, 6. T.12N., R.6E., Sections 2,3,4,9,10,11,14,15,16,19,20,21,30,29,31,32,33. T.14N, R.6E, Sections 34, 35. T.13N, R.6E, Sections 3,4,5,8,9,17,20,21,22,27,28,29,32,33. Humboldt Meridian. The project area is located almost entirely within the Katimiin Cultural Management Area (Klamath NF Land and Resource Management Plan, 1994) and Northern Spotted Owl Critical Habitat designation (U.S Fish and Wildlife, 2012). Less than 100 acres of the project overlaps with Late Successional Reserve land allocations (Klamath NF Land and Resource Management Plan, 1994).

The Somes Bar Project represents a collaborative demonstration project in alignment with the National Cohesive Wildland Fire Management Strategy (WFLC 2014), as the first step in achieving the strategies outlined by the Western Klamath Restoration Partnership. A hyperlink to the document is here <http://WKRP Plan>.

As a Cohesive Strategy demonstration project, we are providing a rare example of how to build local capacity for implementing controlled burning at larger scales. The vision of the National Cohesive Wildland Fire Management Strategy is to safely and effectively extinguish fire when needed; use fire where allowable; manage our natural resources; and as a nation, learn to live with wildland fire.

“The outcome of the cohesive strategy effort is a commitment to the doctrine that, as stakeholders, we all share responsibilities for managing our lands; protecting our nation’s natural, tribal, and cultural resources and making our communities safe and resilient for future generations” Tom Harbour, retired National Fire Director USFS.

The Somes Bar Integrated Fire Management Project is a culmination of several years of collaborative planning community workshops and field reviews, data collection and preliminary analysis using LIDAR (high resolution remote sensing method) and geographic information system computer modeling.



Figure 1 - Photo of Collaborative Group on a field trip in the fall of 2015.

For the first time, Karuk Tribe employees participated in the development of land management treatments founded upon traditional ecological knowledge (TEK). Tribal wildlife, archeology

and food security crews were instrumental in gathering field data used to formulate treatment prescriptions. For millennia, the Karuk used fire to maintain cultural use plants, forage for elk, deer and other wildlife, managing insect infestations, and providing periods of inversion cooling to enhance survival of anadromous fish providing abundant food sources, materials as tools, clothing and pharmaceuticals. These human-fire relationships according to TEK are inseparable from the natural fire regime.

To further daylight what this project entails, the implementation of treatments would require the use of ground, cable and road based heavy equipment to remove excessive fuel build up in plantations about 40 years of age and older, and some mature natural stands as a pre-treatment to prescribed burning. The residual canopy closure would be maintained at 40-60% of existing conditions. Important cultural and ecological plant species would be targeted for enhancement wherever possible. For example, stands where mature oaks or sugar and ponderosa pines are being encroached by other less desirable conifer species (primarily Douglas-fir), efforts would be aimed at culturing around these species to promote their health and vigor and to help ensure these species continue to thrive in the project area. This will also aid in our efforts to provide meaningful forest industry jobs. Some mechanized equipment is being considered to operate within the outer 80 feet of riparian reserves within plantations where necessary to meet project objectives, but would be restricted outside the 160 ft. buffer in natural stands allowing for solely manual and low intensity prescribed burning methods. Use of temporary and landings roads are being considered on a case by case basis. Strategic shaded fuel breaks are proposed to support burning operations.

My intent is to distribute a draft environmental assessment for public review and comment this summer, a final environmental assessment and draft decision notice late summer, followed by a signed Decision Notice by mid-September 2017. Public notice, comment and administrative review for this project is governed by 36 CFR 218 Subpart B regulations that provide for a pre-decisional objection process for projects documented in a Decision Notice.

Scoping comments may be (1) emailed to cblack@fs.fed.us. Please make sure you include the Somes Bar Project in the subject line of your email; (2) hand delivered between 8 a.m. and 4:30 p.m. weekdays to 1330 Bayshore Way, Eureka, CA 95501-3834 or to the Orleans Ranger District, 1 Ishi Pishi road, Orleans, CA 95556; or (3) faxed to (707) 441-3598.

For more information, contact Nolan Colegrove (Project Leader) at 530-629-3291 or Corrine Black (Project Co-leader) at 707-442-1721.

Sincerely,



/s/

MERV GEORGE JR.
Forest Supervisor

Enclosure